

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN FORT RICHARDSON, ALASKA

August 2002

The United States Army Alaska (USARAK) proposes to fully implement an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) at Fort Richardson during 2002-2006 to manage natural resources, support the military mission, provide outdoor recreation opportunities and comply with various environmental laws. Implementation will include ongoing operations over the five-year period using both in-house and external personnel. The primary focus of the program will be to survey natural resources and implement programs to conserve and manage them in a proactive manner in compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

CEQ regulations suggest NEPA documents be combined with other agency documents to reduce duplication and paperwork (40 CFR 1506.4) so that agencies can focus on the real purpose of the NEPA analysis, which is making better decisions. In an effort to follow Army guidelines recommending concurrent preparation of the INRMP and its associated NEPA analysis, USARAK has prepared a single document. The resulting “planning assessment” includes a comprehensive description, analysis, and evaluation of all environmental components at Fort Richardson in the form of an Environmental Assessment (EA).

The EA addresses two alternatives – the preferred alternative and the no action alternative. Other management alternatives were considered during the screening process, but eliminated because they were economically infeasible, ecologically

unsound, or incompatible with the requirements of the military mission. Chapters 3-7 of the INRMP contain descriptions of the methods used to develop management measures for each resource area and the rationale for why certain management measures were selected. This approach supports Army guidance for concurrent preparation and integration of the INRMP and NEPA documentation.

Preferred Alternative – Implement the INRMP for Fort Richardson, Alaska over the 2002-2006 Planning Period. Implementation of this proposal would meet the Army’s need to fulfill natural resource management goals, objectives, and policy on military lands in Alaska and to guide natural resource managers in decision-making regarding management of military land and proposed management projects concurrent with the military mission. The proposed action involves the implementation of the management objectives listed in Chapters 3-7 for each resource at Fort Richardson. The five-year planning period (2002-2006) allows for natural resources to be adaptively managed over time. Thus, projects and management schemes are structured to support this time frame.

The Fort Richardson INRMP is a “living” document that focuses on a five-year planning period based on past and present actions. Short-term management practices included in the plan have been developed without compromising long-range goals and objectives. Because the plan will be modified over time, additional environmental analyses may be required as new management measures

are developed over the long-term (i.e., beyond five years).

Current Management / No Action Alternative – Do not implement the INRMP for Fort Richardson, Alaska. Under the no action alternative, the management objectives set forth in the INRMP would not be implemented. Current management objectives would remain in effect and are described for each resource in Chapters 3-7. The existing condition of the human environment at Fort Richardson would continue as the status quo under the no action alternative. This state is defined as those conditions described in Chapter 2, Affected Environment, without implementation of the proposed action objectives listed in Chapters 3-7. Development and consideration of a no action alternative is required by CEQ regulation (40 CFR 1502.14(d)) and serves as a benchmark against which proposed federal actions can be evaluated.

The 2002-2006 INRMP (the preferred alternative) is an update of the current 1998-2002 Fort Richardson INRMP. Many of the proposed projects in the current plan have been funded and implemented on Fort Richardson. However, some projects have not been completed. Funds have been obligated towards completion of the following projects and are considered part of the current management (the no action alternative):

- Staff salaries, equipment, and supplies
- Cultural resources studies
- LCTA program
- Forest Management Plan and Commercial Feasibility Study
- Range improvement activities
- Conduct moose and caribou censuses
- Develop Cross Cultural Communication Steering Committee
- Develop recreational computerized check-in/check-out system

Other Alternatives Considered and Eliminated. Additional alternatives considered for the management of Fort Richardson's natural resources are described and evaluated within the sections of Chapters 3-7 that discuss the management of each

resource. During the development of these various management alternatives, it was determined that an infinite number of management schemes are possible. Consistent with the intent of NEPA, this process focused on considering a reasonable range of resource-specific management alternatives and, from those, developing a plan that could be implemented, as a whole, in the foreseeable future. Management alternatives that were considered during the screening process, but not analyzed in detail, are discussed within Chapters 3-7 as is the rationale for their non-selection. Application of this screening process in developing the proposed action (implementation of the management options listed in Chapters 3-7 of this INRMP) eliminated the need to define and evaluate hypothetical alternatives to plan implementation. As a result, the EA (which is an integral part of this document) formally addresses only two alternatives: the proposed action and the no action alternative (current management).

Anticipated Environmental Effects. The purpose for natural resources management is to have a positive effect on the environment. Based on the analysis in this chapter, it is concluded that overall, the proposed natural resources management will produce a positive effect on the environment. However, there are some short-term negative impacts while projects are being conducted, but these will not significantly affect the environment. These same projects that may produce short-term impacts will result in long-term positive impacts.

Compared to the no action alternative, environmental conditions at Fort Richardson would improve as a result of implementing the proposed INRMP. These proposed natural resource projects are designed to have a positive benefit to the environment, as well as to mitigate the intensive use of both the military and recreational users. Overall, the cumulative impact of these proposed actions would be positive. Therefore, the proposed action is the preferred alternative.

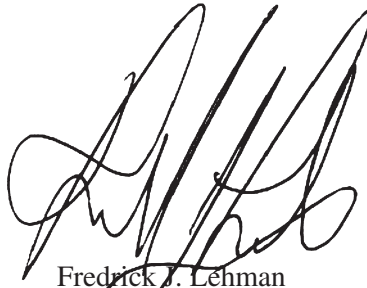
Facts and Conclusions Leading to the FNSI. The proposed action to implement the INRMP for Fort Richardson was analyzed by comparing potential environmental consequences against existing conditions. Findings indicate that, under the preferred

alternative, potential consequences would result in either no significant adverse effects or only beneficial effects on each resource area (see Section 9.2). Proceeding with the preferred alternative would not significantly or adversely impact the affected environment. Additionally, no significant cumulative effects would be expected.

Comments received during the public review period were reviewed and relevant issues were addressed and incorporated into the revised INRMP/EA. Any additional comments on this action should be directed to the following address:

Directorate of Public Works
730 Quartermaster Road
ATTN: APVR-RPW-EV (G. Larsen)
Fort Richardson, AK 99505-6500
Phone: (907) 384-3074
Fax: (907) 384-3047
E-mail: garylarsen@richardson.army.mil

Based on the analyses in the EA for implementation of the INRMP at Fort Richardson, Alaska, it is USARAK's decision to select the preferred alternative as described in the EA. USARAK also concluded that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) is warranted because the action would have no significant environmental or socioeconomic effects. Because no significant effects would result from implementation of the proposed action, preparation of an EIS is not required, and preparation of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) is appropriate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fredrick J. Lehman', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Fredrick J. Lehman
Colonel, U.S. Army
Garrison Commander

